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National Intelligence Bulletin

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National Intelligence Bulletin

October 23, 1975

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PORTUGAL

A "popular power" demonstration in Lisbon this evening is being orchestrated by its Communist and far-left sponsors into a major challenge to the Azevedo government.

The Communist-dominated trade union confederation, Intersindical, yesterday appealed for massive participation in the demonstration, which it is billing as a protest against government efforts to turn Portugal to the right. The confederation said government and military leaders were creating a situation reminiscent of that in Chile when "the people's government" of Salvador Allende was overthrown.

The demonstration is expected to include the same leftist front organizations that created violent incidents in Porto last week. No plans for government security forces to either counter or control the demonstration have been announced, even though several Portuguese papers reported Tuesday that it might be used as a springboard to launch a leftist coup attempt.

In another act of defiance against government authority, thousands of left-wing soldiers and civilians yesterday seized control of the transmitter site of the Catholic radio outside Lisbon. The station, which was wrested from church control months ago by leftist workers, was taken off the air last month by Prime Minister Azevedo because of its hard anti-government line. The demonstrators occupying the transmitter site have vowed to resume "revolutionary" broadcasts.

The seizure probably complicated President Costa Gomes' scheduled audience yesterday with Pope Paul. The government's handling of the church radio issue was one of the principal items on their agenda.

Short of complete government capitulation, the present Communist and far-left campaign sooner or later seems bound to lead to bloodshed. Since the coup of April 25, 1974, successive Portuguese governments, without exception, have been reluctant to use force—probably to avoid the inevitable comparison with the harsh methods of the Salazar-Caetano regime.

Many of Portugal's current leaders also believe that the use of force against military and civilian indiscipline would only make the sponsors of these activities appear to be more powerful and influential than they are. There are obvious limitations to this argument, however. As time goes on without the government being able to address the country's basic economic and social problems, the need to restore order—and therefore risk a confrontation—becomes more pressing.

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SPAIN

Public and private accounts on the status of Franco's health conflict. Official statements emphasize his recovery, while private assessments dwell on the irreversibility of the damage done.

The conflicting reports on his condition may be because of Franco's apparent determination to resume normal activity against the wishes of his doctors, who have warned that doing so could be fatal. None of the optimistic medical bulletins issued to date has been signed by doctors—in contrast to Franco's last illness in 1974.

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Many high officials in the government and military fear a "power vacuum" in Spain at a time when the Spanish Saharan problem has become critical and a wave of terrorism continues at home. They would prefer that Franco step down now, and if it becomes apparent that he will not recover fully from his heart attacks, they may well initiate proceedings to have him declared incapacitated.

If Franco will not transfer power voluntarily, the constitutional procedure for vacating his office requires recognition of his incapacitation by two thirds of the cabinet, the advisory 17-man Council of the Realm, and of the legislature. Such a procedure could take some time, but once accomplished Juan Carlos would be sworn in as King Juan III within eight days.

There is no evidence of unusual military preparations in Madrid. The city is calm, life is normal, and there is markedly less apparent unhappiness among civilians and security forces over the prospect of Franco's death than was the case in 1974. This does not reflect hostility toward Franco, but rather a preoccupation with the problems that will survive him.

The government's handling of the situation following Carrero Blanco's assassination in December 1973 and Franco's serious illness in the summer of 1974 has created precedents for orderly transfers of power. Madrid radio broadcasts, while playing down the seriousness of Franco's health problems, have repeatedly assured listeners that, in any case, institutions will survive and there is a "valid successor" standing in the wings.

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LEBANON

The two USIA officers kidnaped in Beirut yesterday are still missing. It is not known who is responsible or what their demands are. Prime Minister Karami is personally coordinating an intensive search for the two officials.

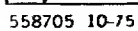
Meanwhile, the fighting in Beirut lessened somewhat yesterday. Roadblocks set up by private militiamen and kidnappings are still common in all parts of the city.

The political subcommittee of the national dialogue committee met again yesterday, but neither leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt nor Phalangist leader Pierre Jumayyil attended. Jumblatt was still in Damascus, and Jumayyil sent a deputy to the meeting.

Some members of the subcommittee, including middle-of-the-road Christian Raymond Edde, have been trying to persuade Jumayyil to soften his demand that security be restored and the question of the Palestinian role in Lebanon be settled before constitutional reforms can be considered. Muslim and leftist members of the committee reportedly want to consider proposals for governmental reform.

Karami, in a speech to parliament on Tuesday, conceded his government's inability to force the parties to accept a settlement of the conflict and appealed to parliament to find a solution. The US embassy believes that the question of parliament's role will become a major topic of discussion over the next few weeks.

Interior Minister Shamun, supported by Karami, has said that the recommendations of the dialogue committee must be endorsed by parliament as the legally competent body. It remains highly unlikely, however, that the divided and politically impotent parliament will take the lead in ending the conflict.



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SYRIA-ISRAEL

The number of Syrian incursions into the UN buffer zone on the Golan Heights has increased significantly within the past two weeks.

Between October 12 and 21, UN forces reported an average of six such incidents a day. Most were near Al Qunaytirah, usually involving a single military vehicle carrying a few soldiers. The Israelis also are reported to be sending patrols into the buffer area, ignoring UN orders to withdraw.

Under the disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel, troops from both sides are prohibited from entering the UN buffer area. Both countries have violated this provision before. The step-up in such activity could lead to incidents between Israeli and Syrian patrols.

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ISRAEL

Israel is planning to hold local elections in the occupied West Bank and, possibly, in the Gaza Strip as well.

The Israelis may hope to use the elections to buttress their case against Arab states that claim the Palestine Liberation Organization represents the Palestinians and to build up the credentials of the West Bank Palestinians as possible participants in peace negotiations. Tel Aviv contends that the elected leadership in the West Bank is more representative of the Palestinians than the PLO.

The election of at least 60 West Bank village councils is scheduled to start next week. It will be the most extensive election since the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967. The Israelis are also scheduling an election next March for West Bank municipal councils and are seriously considering holding an election in the Gaza Strip about the same time. The Israelis yesterday reappointed an Arab mayor and municipal council for the town of Gaza, apparently in preparation for the Gaza elections.

Elections for a few village councils at a time have been held periodically under the auspices of the Israeli occupation authorities. The most recent was last May. Municipal elections were last held in 1972. Under Jordanian electoral law, which Israel recognizes as applicable, municipal elections should be held again next year.

Jordan has never recognized the validity of a West Bank election held under the Israeli occupation. Jordanian dailies have begun to attack the Israeli plan, saying Arab "patriots" are working to sabotage any election.

Amman does not want to do anything that could be interpreted as sanctioning the Israeli occupation. The Jordanians probably are also concerned that a new election could bring forward a younger leadership, less susceptible to Amman's direction than the present crop of aging West Bank notables.

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AUSTRALIA

A threat by the governor general to intervene in the political impasse over the calling of elections could accelerate the pace toward a national contest.

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In separate [] discussions with Prime Minister Whitlam and Liberal opposition leader Fraser on October 21, the governor general warned that if disruptive politicking continued, he would be forced to intervene. Although the governor generalship is largely honorific, the senior statesman who holds the post has considerable persuasive powers and can dissolve the House of Representatives.

The Liberals believe the governor general's statements are directed more at Whitlam than at them, and probably will now go ahead with their plan to vote down the government's annual budget bills. Fraser's determination has also been strengthened by a strong statement of support from a highly respected former Liberal prime minister. Although a few Liberal senators still question the propriety of cutting off government funds, the possibility of a break in opposition ranks in a Senate vote appears to have receded.

Whitlam is publicly holding to his threat to persevere even if funds are not voted and to hold the opposition accountable for a dropoff in public services. The Prime Minister may decide, however, that the governor general would see this tack as an unacceptable prolongation of the impasse requiring his intervention. Over the next few weeks, Whitlam may conclude that there is no alternative to national elections that could turn his government out of office.

Throughout the current impasse, both sides have demonstrated a readiness to break the unwritten conventions that have made the Australian system work. Whatever the outcome, the bitter distrust engendered over recent weeks is bound to deepen and prevent a meaningful dialogue between the government and the opposition.

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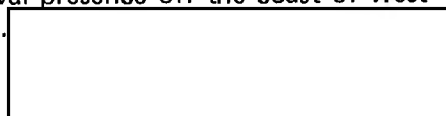
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FOR THE RECORD

USSR: Soviet naval ships apparently will put into Lagos, Nigeria, in about a week for a show-the-flag visit. According to a report given to a US defense attache in Lagos, the contingent will consist of a guided-missile destroyer, a landing ship, and a tanker. This will be the first Soviet naval visit to Nigeria since the civil war ended there in 1970. The Soviets maintain a limited naval presence off the coast of West Africa and have port privileges at Conakry, Guinea.



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